



Pocahontas County

OAK GROVE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH - Hillsboro, W. Va.

Organized 1793. This church building which took the place of the old Oak Grove Church building which was located about three-fourth mile from Hillsboro, is in the town of Hillsboro and was built in . . . Oldest Presbyterian organization in Pocahontas County.

Oct. 23, 1940

Helle Y. McLaughlin
Marlinton, W. Va.
Pocahontas County

Oct. 3, 1940

Helle Y. McLaughlin
Marlinton, W. Va.
Pocahontas County

-1-

Chapter 6 - Section 2 - Oak Grove Church from 1900.

The Rev. Jacob Coats Johnson was installed pastor of the Oak Grove Church September 18, 1905, and served faithfully until his resignation November 20, 1927. It was during Mr. Johnson's pastorate that the present house of worship was built in the town of Hillsboro, West Virginia. Also the Union Church at Seebert was dedicated June 28, 1903. Fine evangelists preached for Mr. Johnson while here --- such as Revs. Drs. Robinson, Miley, Lacy and Hall. The Rev. John C. Riddle, who was a fine young man, assisted Mr. Johnson during the vacation of 1923. He enjoyed very much the work in all the churches and took great interest in the mission work on Ceasar's Mountain. The Presbyterial met here in 1920 and formed the Auxiliary.

Mr. Johnson was greatly beloved by all classes of people. A great sorrow came into his life while here in the loss of his charming wife, Anna Webster Johnson. At the church in Hillsboro a memorial window was built to comemorate her virtues. His second marriage was to Miss Mary Edgar Beard and they have four interesting children to bless their union. After Mr. Johnson accepted a call to Covesville, Virginia, we had various ministers to preach for us while the pulpit was vacant, as Revs. Shiflet, Graw and Bowen.

We then invited different men to preach for us in view of a call and finally accepted the services of Rev. Meade Randolph Atkinson, who came to us with his wife, Mrs. Grace Charlton Adkinson and baby Martha Doling Atkinson on May 15,

-2-

1929. They were students fresh from the training school at Richmond, Virginia. This was his first pastorate. We all, without one single exception, thought them a fine couple. They were with us until 1932.

Then came Rev. Marlin B. Curry from 1932 until 1936. After Rev. Curry came Rev. J. E. Knight who was here until 1939.

At the present time there is no regular preacher at this church. Dr. Samuel Moore has been supplying the pulpit for a few months and will be here until late fall, but because of his health, he is compelled to spend the winters in Florida. The church is now being reroofed and repaired and the congregation will call a pastor very soon.

The membership of the church at this time is about two hundred persons. The Sunday school enrollment is about two hundred and eleven. On the fifth Sunday of the month on which they occur, union services are held here with the Methodists.

The elders now serving are:

Henry Beard

Harper Beard

John Hamrick

C. W. Kennison

William Cackley

Duncan Moore

The deacons are:

Kyle Beard

John May

Carl Beard

-3-

Cameron Beard

Joe McNeel

Eric Clutter

Preston McLaughlin

Moffett McNeel

Walter D. Clark

Women's Work.

In 1902 the ladies of the Oak Grove Church were organized into the two societies, the "Ladies' Aid Society" and the "Woman's Missionary Society". Mrs. H. W. McNeel was the first chairman of the Ladies Aid Society and Mrs. Edwin L. Beard of the Womans Missionary Society.

In 1921 the women's work was reorganized according to the Auxiliary plan of worship. Mrs. Lee P. McLaughlin was the first chairman of the Auxiliary. The Womans Auxiliary takes the place of the Aid and Missionary Societies. There are two adult circles and one young ladies circle. Mrs. H. W. McNeel is the present chairman.

Information:

Mrs. Rella Yeager

Mrs. H. W. McNeel

Miss Minnie Wallace

-1-

Chapter 6 - Section 1

During the time that the Rev. John S. Blair gave one third of his time to the Oak Grove Church in 1834, an unusually large number of members were received into the church upon certificate. The names follow:

William Poage
Eliza Poage
Mary V. Beale
Margaret Poage
John White
Jane White
Patrick Hare
Mrs. --- Hare
Sam'l Hare
Valentine Cackley
William C. Price
Eleanor Hare
John Hare
Mary Ann Price
Thomas Bradshaw
Mrs. Ophelia Beale
Henry M. and Mary Moffett
Rachel C. Beard
John Hogshead and wife
Miss Elizabeth Poage
Mrs. Elizabeth Miller

Pocahontas County

-2-

Mrs. R. G. Poage
Mrs. A. E. Brown
George Washington Poage
Mr. and Mrs. Corby
Miss Caroline Miller
James Miller
Mrs. Smith
Mary Johnson
Jane Miller
Cyrus Poage
Andrew D. Johnson
Mrs. E. Johnson
J. W. Miller
Harriet P. Miller
Anne Lewis
Elizabeth Smith
Nancy Hogshead
Margaret Hogshead
Rhoda Corby
John Samuel (person of color)
John Parrott
Sophia Smith
Rachel Hogshead
C. I. Allen

July 24, 1940

Nelle Y. McLaughlin
Marlinton, W. Va.

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

Chap. 6 - Sec. 1- -1-

minutes from the Session of the Oak Grove Church.

June 23, 1836

Session of the Oak Grove Church met at the home of S. D. Poage, members present: George Poage, Josiah Beard, S. D. Poage, The case of Sampson L. Mathews was considered of an affray with John Graham of Huntersville, whereupon said Sampson L. Mathews was notified to appear before the Session of Oak Grove Church, at said church on July 5, at 11 o'clock and citation for the following witnesses were also issued, viz: Doct. McClellon, William Duncan, and Moses H. Poage to prove the charge which occurred on the last Monday of April, last. George Poage was elected moderator of above session which adjourned to meet accordingly.

S. D. Poage, CLK.

GEORGE POAGE, Mod.

1836, July 5th.

Session met according to adjournment, constituted with prayer. Members present, George Poage, Josiah Beard, Sam'l D. Poage. George Poage was chosen moderator. Mr. Sampson Mathews being duly cited in the case of an affray with John Graham of Huntersville, on the last Monday of April, again failed to appear, and the Session being fully satisfied that he did not intend to obey the citation, are unanimously of the opinion that he is guilty of contempt of the lawful authority of the Church of Christ, and ought to be dealt with as one refusing to hear the church. Whereupon, Resolved that he be and he is hereby excluded from the communion of the church until he repent.

The Judicatory then assigned the management of Mr. Mathew's

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-2-

case to Rev. Joseph Brown, and proceeded to take the testimony which is as follows:

DOCTOR McCLELLEN being duly sworn, stated: On the last Monday of April last, I was standing at the extreme end of Mr. Graham's porch, at which time I heard a considerable talking which attracted my attention. I went from where I stood to ascertain the cause, when I found that Mr. Mathews and Mr. Graham were disputing something about the appointment of a commission of a road leading from Huntersville to some point in Nicholas County. Very shortly after this, they left the place on which they were standing and approached near the corner of Mr. Graham's store house, when I heard Mr. Graham dispute Mr. Mathew's words about something, I know not what. Mr. Mathews then turned and told Mr. Graham that he was a liar and shook his fist in Mr. Graham's face. Mr Graham then drew a small knife, which Mr. Mathews saw and immediately drew a very large one from his pocket, opened it, and held it firmly in his hand. Immediately after this Mr. Graham started from where he stood on the Tavern porch, entered the porch and seated himself. Mr. Mathews followed immediately after him, the language which passed at that time, I do not recollect. However, Mr. Mathews turned and left the porch, and Mr. Graham told him if he entered his house again he would kill him. Mr. Mathews then did enter the house and told him to kill him. Q. by Mr. Brown, Did you interfere when standing at the corner of the store house? Ans. I did, and asked them to separate seeing that they both had knives drawn, and they paid no attention to me so I left them to themselves. Q. By same, Was it immediately after your interference

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-3-

that Mr. Graham walked to the porch? A. It was, there were probably some words passed between them. Q. By same, Did Mr. Mathews follow Mr. Graham immediately to the porch, or was he drawn to the porch by some language used by Mr. Graham when there? A. He followed him immediately and I thought Mr. Graham was probably not aware of his being after him, by his countenance after he entered the porch. Q. By Mr. Beard, Is not Mr. Graham quite a small man? A. He is in comparison with Mr. Mathews. Q. By same, Did Mr. Mathews use profane language? A. I do not recollect that he used profane language. Q. By same, Did Mr. Mathews draw his knife the second time after entering the porch? A. I am not certain. Q. By Mr. Brown, Was not Mr. Graham's language to Mr. Mathews of an abusive character? A. The first language that I heard was, I did not hear the commencement.

Mr. John Hanes did not attend in person, but sent his testimony certified by a magistrate, together with his reasons for not attending by Mr. Brown, which were sustained.

Mr. Hanes stated: When I first observed Mr. Mathews and Mr. Graham they were conversing together near Mr. Graham's lumber house. Very soon their conversation became quite loud, and I understood that it had reference to the appointment of commissioners to lay out a new road from this place to some point in the County of Nicholas. Both appeared to have their feelings excited. Mr. Graham charged Mr. Mathews with acting unfairly in his official capacity as a Justice of the Peace in the appointment of the com-

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-4-

missioners of this road. Mr. Mathews replied to this charge by calling Mr. Graham a liar. Mr. Graham replied to this by calling Mr. Mathews a liar. Mr. Mathews then shook his fist in Mr. Graham's face and Mr. Graham then drew his knife, telling Mr. Mathews he should not impose on him. Mr. Mathews then drew his knife. After this Mr. Graham then walked into his porch and seated himself. Mr. Mathews then followed him into the porch and walked close up to him with his knife drawn, repeatedly saying to him in a tone of defiance, "Kill me, now kill me." Mr. Mathews afterwards came across the street into my shop. I then urged him to become reconciled to Mr. Graham. And he replied that if he thought he had done wrong he was willing to make acknowledgements, but he did not think himself in fault.

After duly considering the testimony in the case of Mr. Mathews in an affray with John Graham in Huntersville, on the last Monday in April last, the Session are unanimously of opinion that he was guilty of unchristian conduct and whereupon that it be resolved he ought to be and hereby is excluded from the communion of the church until he give satisfactory evidence of repentance and amendment of life.

S. D. POAGE, CLK.

GEORGE POAGE, MODERATOR.

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-1-

Chapter 6-

Minutes of the Session of the Oak Grove Church, Hillsboro, W. Va.
April 23, 1837.

Session convened at the home of E. D. Poage, opened with prayer by Moderator. The session took under consideration the application of Mrs. Nancy Mathews for a certificate of dismissal from the church. After due consideration, it was resolved that a certificate be not granted and that for the following reasons:

1st. Because the session has evidence to believe that it is not the intention of the *member* making the application to remove from the bounds of the congregation or unite with any other church.

2nd. This being the case, the session do not think themselves warranted by the constitution of our church, or by the word of God to grant this request. The session view themselves as acting under the authority of God and bound to act in conformity with his word, (whatever you do in word and deed - do all to the glory of God) when an individual believes that such a change has been wrought in his or her heart as qualifies for membership in the Church of Christ, it is the duty of such individual to state the evidence of the change to the officers of the church. If they are satisfied that the individual has undergone a saving change of heart it is made their duty to receive the applicant into the communion of the church. When persons have thus been received, the session do not consider that they have the right voluntarily to withdraw from the church, unless they can point to some passage in God's word giving them that privilege. Nor do the session consider

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-2-

that they, as the Judicatory of the church, have the right to sanction such disorder by giving such liberty, unless they find authority in the word of God or constitution of the church which gives them such right. Such authority, the session are convinced is not contained in the word of God or the "Confession of Faith" and therefore they feel bound to refuse the application

JOSEPH BROWN, Mod.

June 18, 1837.

Ellen Hanes appeared before the session and made satisfactory acknowledgements of regret for having engaged in a dance at Thomas Bradshaw's.

J. BROWN, Mod.

Sept. 1837.

Mr. Thomas Bradshaw presented his certificate of dismissal from the church at the head of Green^{river}bryer, with that of his wife, as members in good regular standing up to the time of their removal from the bounds of that church (which was upwards to one year ago) to this church to be received as its members. Mr. Bradshaw having incurred the censure of the church, in the inter by tolerating a dance at his house and also by selling a horse in Huntersville on the Sabbath day, made satisfactory acknowledgement of regret to the session (being opened with prayer by the moderator) was accordingly received.

J. BROWN, Mod.

Dr. John Henry

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-3-

Sept 8, 1839.

Session met, was opened with prayer, all its members present, Mr. Thomas Bradshaw personally and voluntarily appeared before the session and made statement and acknowledgement of the fact that he permitted a civil dance at his house on the evening of Fourth of July last. Mr. Bradshaw, though, did not strictly justify dancing as right, yet thought it the least of two evils which would certainly follow on the occasion (the marriage of his daughter). Mr. Bradshaw not being disposed to express any regret for the deed, nor to give the session any acknowledgement to hope for a different course of management in future. Mr. Bradshaw having been previously before the session for a similar offense, the session thought it their duty to suspend Mr. Bradshaw from the communion of the church, and he was accordingly suspended.

J. BROWN, Mod.

July 29, 1940

Nelle Y. McLaughlin
Marlinton, W. Va.

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

Chapter 6 - Sec. 1

-1-

GREENBRIER PRESBYTERY, the pioneer presbytery of the Virginia territory west of the Alleghenies, was organized in the Old Stone Church at Lewisburg on the second Tuesday of April, 1838. A minute of the Synod of Virginia in session at Lexington October 10, 1837, reads, "An extract from the minutes of Lexington Presbytery was read in relation to the division of said Presbytery and a request presented that the Synod should divide that body and designating a line of division which they desired might be established, on which the committee on Bills and Overtures made the following report: Resolved, that the request be granted and that the said Presbytery be divided by a line commencing at the intersection of the Allegheny Mountains with the southern boundary of Hardy County and thence along the top of the mountain to the boundary of Giles County and thence along the dividing line between Giles and Monroe Counties to New River, and that the ministers and churches west of said line are hereby constituted a presbytery to be known by the name of Greenbrier Presbytery, and said Presbytery shall hold its first meeting at Lewisburg on the second Tuesday in April next and be opened with a sermon by Rev. John McElhenny, or in case of his absence by the senior minister present.

The report was adopted and in pursuance of this action seven ministers and six ruling elders met in Lewisburg on the second Tuesday of April 1838, for the organization of the Presbytery.

Dr. John McElhenny preached the opening sermon. His

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-2-

text was from the fifth verse of the Twentieth Psalm: "In the name of our God we will set up our banners." In the introduction of his sermon, Dr. McElhenny said about the words of his text: "No words could be better suited to our particular situation," and it is interesting to recall some things he said in that sermon, which has been preserved: "The region over which we are called to exercise a Presbyterian influence is not less than one hundred and fifty miles square, containing a population of more than one hundred thousand souls. -- We love our church. We prefer it to any other, but we do not believe that the visible church is confined within the limits of our own denomination. It is entirely a mistake to suppose that truth and religion can be promoted by accommodating them to the world. We must preach the gospel -- in the plain, unsophisticated manner in which it is presented in this book. The more completely we are stripped of every shadow of self-dependence and trust alone in the arm of Heaven the more certain we will be to succeed. Every member of this Presbytery must measurably assume the character of a missionary."

The territory embraced in the original Greenbrier Presbytery as indicated by the minutes of the Synod of Virginia was quite large, including a small area within the boundary of the present Commonwealth of Virginia and much of the central and south-central part of what is now the state of West Virginia, extending from the Alleghenies to the Ohio River, much of which was yet undeveloped country.

The original churches of the Presbytery were: Lewisburg,

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-3-

Union, Spring Creek, Oak Grove, Head of Greenbrier (now Liberty), (both of the last named churches are in Pocahontas County), Tygart's Valley, Anthony's Creek, Parkersburg, Point Pleasant, Hughes River, Carmel, Huttonsville, Charleston and Muddy Creek.

One interesting item in the work of the first meeting of the Presbytery was the adoption for report to the General Assembly of a "Narrative of the State of Religion" in the following words: "The Presbytery of Greenbrier, in presenting the first Narrative of the State of Religion within our bounds to the General Assembly are impressed with feelings of both gratitude and humiliation. The organization of the new Presbytery in the western mountains of our state where thirty years ago there was only one minister of our denomination is evidence that the cause we profess to love is advancing among us. The means of grace are better attended, the attention more pleasing, and to some of the churches there have been a few additions. Sabbath schools and other means of instructing our youth are encouraged.

"We are constrained to admit the low state of piety among us, both in churches and individuals, and the common neglect of the domestic religious duties, family prayer, parental instruction and discipline. The sin of Sabbath breaking much abounds."

Dr. William T. Price says: "The adherents of Presbyterianism in the limits of Greenbrier Presbytery are the descendants to a large extent of those Scotch and Scotch-Irish"

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-4-

people who occupied this region at an early day. Many of these persons had settled in Pennsylvania. Thence emigrating west and south, settlements were formed and churches established in the valley of Virginia about the year 1740 and at intervals thereafter. In the years that followed, the more inviting portions of Monroe, Greenbrier, Kanawha and Pocahontas Counties were occupied by a goodly number of families". Dr. Price then quotes from an article written by Rev. James H. Leps: "They were a sturdy race, inured to hardships and accustomed to privations. Their ancestors had received their idea of religion and their mental and spiritual training amidst the fierce struggles and persecutions of the Reformation. The doctrines upon which the great battle of the Reformation was fought -- were the doctrines which formed the warp and woof of their religious instruction and moulded their spiritual life."

In order to appreciate fully the situation of those who formed those early settlements west of the Alleghenies and the difficulties they faced, it must be recalled that this region was very remote from the seat of the colonial government, and that they were poorly provided with means of defense, while being exposed constantly to the dangers of Indian raids. Their situation was all the more difficult and perilous because of the troubles arising from the long and bitter struggle between the French and English for supremacy in the Mississippi Valley; a struggle in which the Indians were the pawns and in which one of the principal stakes was the possession of this region "west of the mountains" where the pioneers of this country had chosen

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-5-

to establish their settlements.

At the organization of the Greenbrier Presbytery there were seven ministers and six ruling elders present. Those present were: Rev. John McElhenny, Rev. Francis Thornton, Rev. James M. Brown, Rev. William G. Campbell, Rev. David R. Preston, Rev. Joseph Brown, and Rev. John Blain; and Ruling Elders George Rapp, Moses M. Fuqua, Samuel Brown, William Shanklin, Thomas Beard and T. O'Hara. The number of ministers was increased immediately by the reception of Rev. Festus Hanks. Rev. A. S. Morrison and Rev. Francis Dutton were not present.

The aggregate membership of the churches which constituted the new Presbytery was 1,423, a membership which was scattered over a territory comparable to the area now embraced within the limits of the Synod of West Virginia of the Southern Presbyterian Church.

Dr. Price pays special tribute to some of the ministers in the first half-century of the Presbytery's history. Of Henry Ruffner he says, "He had a national reputation"; of Stuart Robinson, "He was one of the most prominent pulpit orators in the American Presbyterian Church"; and of the labors of John McElhenny, James M. Brown, Samuel R. Houston, Joseph Brown, and M. D. Dunlap, "They accomplished more for the best interests of society than any other equal number of names to be looked for in any other sphere of professional work". Of those who labored and have gone before us there are besides those mentioned by Dr. Price whose names would come immed-

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-6-

ately to our minds: J. C. Barr, Matthew Lyle Lacy, the Sydenstrickers, James H. Leps, and others. But these were Dr. Price's contemporaries and he did not mention them. And certainly any list of ours now would include Dr. Price himself.

NOTE: The Presbyterian Churches in Pocahontas County are in the Greenbrier Presbytery.

Reference;

The Church of the Western Waters -- Courtney

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-1-

Chapter 6 - Section 1

Minutes of the Session of the Oak Grove Church.

April 16, 1869.

Session of the Oak Grove Church met on this day, and opened with prayer by the Moderator M. D. Dunlap. Present S. H. Clark, R. G. Miller, Geo. B. Moffett, Matt Wallace. Heard the report of R. G. Miller, one of the committee appointed to visit J. H. M. Beard, and Wallace Beard to know why they had absented themselves from church and been neglecting the ordinances of the same. He reports that he saw Mr. J. H. M. Beard and he said the reason that he had been absent from church was that it was a long ways to come and that the roads were bad, his wife had a young child and he did not like to leave her alone, but that he was sorry and would like to have Mr. Dunlap preach either at his house or at his father's house at suitable times so that they could attend preaching. Mr. Miller further states that Wallace Beard said that he did not enjoy Mr. Dunlap's preaching as well since the war as he did before, but did not think he had less enjoyment in the religious life he had enjoyed formerly, but that he would come to preaching when convenient. This report was received and adopted by the Session.

MATT WALLACE, CLK.

April 29, 1870.

Session of Oak Grove Church met this day, opened with prayer, members present M. D. Dunlap (Moderator), S. H. Clark, Geo. B. Moffett and Matt Wallace. Deacons report due and unpaid our

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-2-

stated supply M. D. Dunlap to the first day of April, 1870,
\$330.54, collection for sustenance \$15.85, publications \$11.15,

Spiritual condition of the church is far from being such
as we could desire, but still hope we are not retrograding, but
upon the whole we are advancing slowly spiritually. Our prayer
meeting tolerably well attended.

Oct. 18, 1870.

In reporting to the congregation on the spiritual condi-
tion of the church that whilst a few exhibited a good and chris-
tian zeal and take a deep interest in the cause of religion, yet
it is a sad reflection that many are cold to lukewarm.

Jan. 21, 1871.

Session of Oak Grove Church met this day. Members pres-
ent: M. D. Dunlap, Moderator, S. H. Clark, G? B? Moffett and
Mathew Wallace.

1st. Deacons report. Due and unpaid stated supply,
M. D. Dunlap from 1st of January, 1867 to Dec. 31, 1870, \$376.75
Deacons also report that there was raised for education 10.25
Due the sexton services rendered for year, 1870 5.50

The Committee for sustenance for Greenbrier Presbytery
recommends a plan for the purpose of raising money for aiding
our feeble churches and more fully occupying our destitute
territories. The session of the church recommended the fol-
lowing plan to the members of this church and those who are
willing to aid us. That the head of each family make out an ac-
count for what the head of each family and each member thereof
s willing to give for the object of sustenance and give said

account to the deacons with the money or with the understanding that the money is to be paid before this, the 1st day of March, next. The session reports that so far as the spiritual condition of the church is concerned that it is about as it has been, but by no means as healthy as it ought to be.

S. H. CLARK, Clk.

Session of Oak Grove Church met Sept. 2, 1871, members present, Josiah Beard, R. G. Miller, Geo. B. Moffett, M. D. Dunlap, Mathew Wallace. Josiah Beard was chosen Moderator. Session was opened with prayer.

The session at a previous meeting appointed this meeting for the purpose of giving the Rev. M. D. Dunlap an opportunity for making explanation (st his request) as to certain objections made against him as a minister of the gospel.

1st. That on the 5th day of August, 1869, the Rev. M. D. Dunlap did preach a sermon which was objected to by Col. Paul McNeel and Wm. L. Beard, on the grounds that the first part of the sermon was what was to become of those who rebelled against the Civil government of man, and that it was too political.

2nd. That the Rev. M. D. Dunlap is charged by public rumor with having taken the iron clad test oath since the war, for the purpose of obtaining pay for property taken by Federal government during the war, and that he introduced his colored man as a witness contrary to the laws of Virginia.

3rd. That in a conversation with Col. P. McNeel and Wm.

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-4-

L. Beard, Esq., each separately, they inquired of Rev. M. D. Dunlap if he would not have to take the test oath in order to get pay for his property. His answer was that he did not intend to take the oath, that Judge Harrison was to attend to it for him and that he had some underground mode by which he could do it.

At this state of the proceedings Dr. M. Wallace was called away and Dr. G. B. Moffett was made Clerk in his place.

4th. Paper marked "A" and handed in by W. W. Beard, read and ordered to be copied as follows:

That Rev. M. D. Dunlap is applying for pay for his property, had led me to suspect in order to get pay, he must either take the test oath, or imply a third person to misrepresent him to the government, which would not only inflict a great wrong on the government, but also on his church.

Paper marked " B" and accepted and ordered to be copied.

Sept 1, 1871.

Session of Oak Grove Church:

Sometime ago Col. Miller called on me and asked my reasons for not attending church. I gave him a part of them and at the request of M. D. Dunlap, I will give him all my reasons for not supporting him as a minister of the gospel in our church. About the time he had made application to the U. S. Government for pay for his horses and cattle, he made some remarks, after a sermon he had preached, about the loss of our negroes that led me to believe that he thought the south had been wrong and the north right in the war, this led me to the suspicion

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-5-

that he was seeking favor with the U. S. Government, in order to get pay for his lost property; for up to that time, he had certainly been a strong southern man, or at least pretended to be, and how could he obtain compensation from that government without relinquishing his former principles, unless he could get a third person to act in his place and misrepresent his true position during the war, which would be inflicting a great wrong, not only on the U. S. Government, but also on the church which he represents.

Yours &c.

J. H. M. Beard.

Paper "C" ordered to be recorded.

Levels, August 29, 1871.

I being invited to attend a meeting to be held at Oak Grove Church, on the 2nd day of next month, I am not able to attend said meeting. I have no charges to make against the Rev. M. D. Dunlap, but I think for the interest of the church it would be better for Mr. Dunlap to cease being its pastor.

NANNIE BEARD.

OBJECTION 1 & Answer.

The session after hearing the objections against Rev. M. D. Dunlap sermon preached August 8th, 1869 and after hearing it read, fully concurred in the opinion that there was nothing written in that sermon referring to earthly government or political.

2nd.

The session are unanimously of the opinion, after having compared the test oath with the oath taken by Rev. M. D. Dunlap, for obtaining pay for his property from the U. S. Government, that he did not take the test oath, and that the oath he did take marked "D" should be spread upon the record. With reference to the charge against Rev. M. D. Dunlap for introducing the testimony of his negro man for obtaining pay, the session failed to agree.

Permission was asked and granted to Rev. M. D. Dunlap for explaining his reasons for taking the oath he did take and a majority of the session were in favor of sustaining him.

3rd.

The session lastly took up the charges against the Rev. M. D. Dunlap for his remarks to Col. P. McNeel and Wm. T. Beard, that Judge Harrison would put through his claim by an underground mode. Col. McNeel and Wm. T. Beard asserting that he did tell them so, and he, Mr. Dunlap declaring that he had no recollection of ever having made such a remark and had no intention of practicing fraud against the Government of the United States, as he thinks is shown by the papers. The session having full faith in the statements of each party, declined to give a decision.

4th.

Written objections from W. T. Beard, J. H. M. Beard and Nannie Beard referred to the session and as previous acts of the session seemed to cover these charges, the session took

The inside is arranged with the old time gallery

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-7-

no further action.

Paper "D".

State of West Virginia,
County of Pocahontas,

I, Mitchel D. Dunlap, solemnly swear that I believe my age to be fifty-seven years, that I have been a citizen of the county and state aforesaid and state of Virginia for many years, that I was at the date of my claim herein set forth, originated and ever since have been a loyal citizen of the United States. Furthermore, I, the said M. D. Dunlap, do solemnly swear that I will support, protect and defend the government of the United States against all enemies both foreign and domestic, that I will bear true faith, allegiance and loyalty to said constitution and government, that I will faithfully support and abide by all acts of Congress past and all proclamations of the President made during the rebellion relative to slaves, so long and so far as not modified or held void by Congress, or by decision of the Supreme Court of the United States; that I will faithfully perform all duties required of me by law, and further that I do this with full purpose, pledge and promise, without any mental reservations or evasion whatever, So help me God.

M. D. DUNLAP (SEAL)

Sworn to, subscribed and acknowledged before me this 4th day of April, 1866.

MORGAN ANDERSON, J. P.

As to the latter part of objection 2nd, Rev. M. D. Dunlap

The inside is arranged with the old time

ROCKHURST COUNTY

-8-

proved before the session that he did not use a colored man's testimony in any court in Virginia, but only took his affidavit in Virginia to be used in his suit in Washington City where he had been informed by legal gentlemen that colored testimony was lawful.

The foregoing proceedings as recorded in this Book are to show to Presbytery the spiritual condition of the church.
Session closed with prayer.

Geo. B. Moffett, CLK. Pro.Tem

The inside is arranged with the old

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

Chapter 6 - Section 1 - a & b

OAK GROVE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Hillsboro, W. Va.

(The Pioneer Church)

The first Presbyterian Church ever organized within the present limits of the county was that known as the Oak Grove Church in the Little Levels. It is recorded in the Session book of 1830 that a church was in existence thirty or forty years before that period, on the same location occupied by the brick church built in 1828. The Rev. Dr. William Hill of Winchester on a visit to this vicinity in 1793 organized this church with a few members -- the last Elder of which was William Poage, who died April 7, 1838. The early records of the church were lost and no one remembers when it was built. A substantial brick structure in which this sect worshipped for many years was later built southeast of Hillsboro, where the cemetery is still kept up. After the organization of this church in 1793, for many years there was no stated preaching, but being visited at irregular periods it nevertheless grew in numbers and influence. Relatives of some of the Oak Grove people came over from ^{the} old Augusta church with their pastor, Rev. William Wilson to a revival meeting then in progress.

Dr. William T. Price in some of his sketches gives us the information that religious services were conducted in the homes of the Poages within the confines of the

came to the Little Levels, they built a small log

The inside is arranged with the old time gallery

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-2-

church. William Poage, Senior, was a Presbyterian ruling Elder and virtually the founder of The Oak Grove Church. Some of the first meetings conducted by Presbyterian ministers in this region were at his home, or the homes of his sons who were also elders.

Before proceeding with the history of the reorganization of The Oak Grove Church we will go back into the years preceding that event and do homage to the fine heroes who worked and wrought so mightily against such fearful odds, in the spread of the gospel and which gradually led up to the christian privileges and comforts we enjoy today.

To a large extent the Presbyterian element are the Scotch and Scotch-Irish who occupied this region at an early day. This settlement in the Valley of Virginia took place about the year 1740 and at intervals thereafter. In a few years following the more inviting portions of Pocahontas, Monroe, Greenbrier and Kanawha Counties were occupied by a goodly number of families. In a sketch from the pen of Rev. James H. Leps, he refers to these pioneers in the following words: "They were a sturdy race, inured to hardship and accustomed to starvation. The dangers and trying emergencies of frontier life, at that period developed strong elements of character and a goodly degree of intellectual vigor. Educational advantages were extremely limited, yet they placed the highest value on them - being descendants of the founders of colleges and other institutes of learning

came to the little levels, they built a small log

The inside is arranged with the old time gallery

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-2-

wherever they went. Imbued with the doctrines that won the Reformation, they relied upon them in their new environment as the "warp and woof" of religious instruction and spiritual life".

Rev. John Craig, D. D. was one of the most prominent ministers in the early history of our church. He had the most influence upon the immediate ancestors of these persons who planted Presbyterianism in the counties of Pocahontas, Greenbrier, Monroe and Kanawha. Our ancestors embalmed his name in their hearts with their "praises and tears".

Dr. Craig was Master of Arts by graduation from the University of Edinburg. He was guided by a dream in Ireland to his place of service in the wilds of the Virginia Valley. For twenty-five years he was pastor of the old Augusta church, walking five miles to Sunday morning service at 10 A.M. where the remainder of the day was spent in worship, closing at sundown -- after which some of the people rode ten or twelve miles to their homes. This was in 1754. The people were so terrified over Indian incursions that they sought safety in flight, but Dr. Craig told them, "That would be a scandal to our nation, falling below our brave ancestors, making ourselves a reproach among Virginians, a dishonor to our friends at home, an evidence of cowardice, want of faith and noble christian dependence on God as able to save and deliver from the heathen; and withal a lasting blot forever on our posterity." He advised the building of forts and the people came to the little levels, they built a small

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-3-

required him to lead the work which he cheerfully did though it cost him one-third of his estate. In less than two months his congregation was well fortified. His was a mind of keen intelligence, a heart full of generous sentiments and a soul of unswerving courage as exemplified in his walking along his perilous road carrying his Bible, Psalm Book and rifle.

In addition to the Scotch-Irish emigrants there has also been such a proportion of English, Irish and German families as to form a respectable and influential element of the Presbyterian population. The pioneers date their settlements from 1793 to 1796. Not long after ministers paid them visits. Ben Edward Crawford from the South Branch of the Potomac is believed to have been the first to conduct services in this Section, now included in the counties of Greenbrier, Monroe and Pocahontas. The name of Frazier Reed and others linger in tradition, but nothing is definitely known of them.

Many noble, distinguished, and heroic men were members of Greenbrier Presbytery, who served in its courts and went out over the land to implant the seeds of righteousness and truth. As we glance at these names it is true that they would be called remarkable men anywhere. For an example we will quote the story of Rev. John McCue. Thomas Jefferson used his influence to have him devote his talents of splendid promise to the profession of law and withdraw from the ministry. Dr. Stuart

came to the Little Levels, they built a small log cabin and

Robinson was a most eminent conversationalist and the most prominent pulpit orator of the Presbyterian Church. Dr. Henry Ruffner had a national reputation as a peer, as one of the most eminent ministers of the day. It was to Dr. Robinson's consecrated genius that this church owes much of its fidelity to truth. All of these worthy men combined teaching with preaching. Dr. John McElhenny in his service of sixty-three years, and next to him in influence Dr. James Brown in his work of forty years, Dr. Samuel R. Houston in his service of forty-three years, Rev. Joseph Brown, ten years, and Rev. M. D. Dunlap's forty-three years have made a wonderful contribution to the good of humanity by their long unremitting labors.

May 20, 1783, Rev. John McCue preached his ordination sermon at old Monmouth Church, at Lexington, Virginia. Mr. Moses Hoge preached the sermon, Mr. James McConnell to preside, and Mr. Edward Crawford, the charge. It was this historic August visit when the church at Lewisburg and Union were organized and Mr. McCue installed as their pastor. He was probably the first to administer the sealing ordinances of "The Sinks" in Monroe, "The Levels" of Pocahontas, the "Head of Greenbrier" and "Tygarts Valley". From "The Sinks" to "Tygarts Valley" was a journey of one hundred miles with Greenbrier River to cross as well as Cheat Mountain. His pastoral labors continued over nine years, terminating Sept. 20, 1791. His successor was Rev. Benjamin Grisby, who po-

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-8-

possessed charming social qualities and performed a high degree of service.

Taken from the Records of the Oak Grove Church by:

Miss Minnie Wallace

Miss Maggie Ruckman

Mr. M. J. McNeel

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-1-

Chapter 6 - Section 1

A Record of The Oak Grove Church from the reorganization in 1830 to about 1905.

This is a record of the reorganization of "The Oak Grove Church" --- the first Presbyterian organization in the County. It was located about one mile south of Hillsboro on the old pioneer road leading into Greenbrier County at Kenick.

The Rev. Professor Samuel L. Graham was the first to minister regularly here. He was called "Professor", presumably because he was connected in some way with Hampden-Sidney College. He appeared on the scene in the year of 1819, devoting to this church one third of his time -- giving the remainder to Spring Creek and Anthony's Creek. He reorganized this church Aug. 28, 1830.

The charter members were as follows:

Josiah Beard	<i>George Poage</i> Samuel D. Poage	Mrs. Nancy Cackley
John Jordan	Mrs. E. Poage	Mrs. Jane Bradshaw
William Bradshaw	Mrs. Mc. Poage	Mrs. Betsy Poage

The following persons were elected Ruling Elders:

Josiah Beard George Poage John Jordin Samuel D. Poage

The last three were ordained by Rev. S. L. Graham.

S. D. Poage was elected Clerk.

In 1826 the Rev James Kerr gave a part of his time to this people and through his agency the old brick church was built in the oak grove, from which it derived its name. A cemetery was laid out on the ample grounds west of the church and is

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-2-

adheres to it, being the property of the church no matter where the house of worship stands and because of its sacredness was designed to be held in perpetual remembrance.

The Rev. William G. Campbell, in the year 1831, preached one fourth of his time for one year. Mr. Campbell preached frequently in Monroe, Fayette, Pocahontas and Nicholas Counties. His was a fruitful ministry. All the pecuniary aid received for time spent in this service did not exceed one hundred dollars. He sustained himself by private resources and teaching, in which vocation he accomplished a great good. The church year in those days began in September and no doubt the service of one year by these ministers was due to the hardships and privations through which they were called to pass in covering the destitution of a large field.

The church was left vacant after Dr. Campbell's ministry until the year ending 1833, when Dr. John S. Blain commenced his ministerial duties at one third of his time for one year. At this time quite a number of persons joined the church by certificate. In the year 1835 Rev. David Cunningham began his labors as stated supply for one year for one third of his time. †

Another vacancy occurred in the year 1836, but in September 1837, Rev. William Brown moderated a call to Rev. Joseph Brown to become our pastor for one half of his time at \$200.00 per annum, which call was unanimous by a vote of the people. He was installed by the Rev. David Cunningham, and

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-3-

was pastor here until September 1844, a period of seven years. We pause here to sound our praises of this fine man. He sprang from a distinguished ancestry, being one of the youngest of five ministerial sons of Mary Moore of Abbs' Valley. He greatly endeared himself to everyone through a consecrated service of teaching, preaching and charming social qualities. His labors were abundant in the churches of Anthony's Creek, Spring Creek, Oak Grove and Liberty. Through his efforts the "Little Levels Academy" was founded at Hillsboro, West Virginia.

In the year 1838 the Synod of Virginia met at Lexington, Virginia. The Synod of Virginia requested, and the Presbytery at Hillsboro, West Virginia, resolved that a division should be made in the Presbytery. Dr. William Plumer served efficiently as stated clerk. The following record was taken from the minutes dated October 10, 1837:

The Presbytery by a line commencing at the intersection of the Allegheny Mountains with the southern boundary of Hardy County, Virginia, along the top of the mountains of the boundary of Giles and Monroe Counties to the New River, and that the ministers and churches west of said line was to constitute a Presbytery known by the name of Greenbrier Presbytery. It was to hold its first meeting in Lewisburg, West Virginia, on the second Tuesday in April 1838, and be opened with a sermon by Rev. John McElhenny. The ministers present were:

Rev. John McElhenny
Rev Francis Thornton

Rev James M. Brown
Rev. Wm. G. Campbell
Rev. John Blain

Rev. David A. Preston
Rev. Joseph Brown

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-4-

The following Elders were present:

George Rapp
Moses M. Fuqua

Samuel Brown
Wm. Shanklin

Thomas Beard
T. C. Harrah

Mr. McElhenny preached the opening sermon from Psalms 20:5 "And in the name of our God we will set up our banner."

The churches to compose the new Presbytery were as follows:

Lewisburg
Union
Head of Greenbrier
Tygarts Valley
Parkersburg
Hughes' River
Huntersville
Oak Grove

Muddy Creek
New Liberty
Anthony's Creek
Point Pleasant
Carmel
Charleston
Spring Creek

The first action of the new Presbytery was the reception of Rev. Festus Hanks who left New Brunswick Presbytery to unite with us, and was cordially received. He preached a missionary sermon at Oak Grove September 28, 1838, at which a collection of \$21.20 was received for the cause of the missions. Dr. McElhenny began his memorable missionary career in 1808. Being a leader in this section in the missionary enterprise his counsel was sought by the other ministers.

The celebrated Dr. Stuart Robinson said of him, "Dr. McElhenny is the greatest man I ever knew in the ministry because of his active, faithful service." Even in these remote days Greenbrier Presbytery occupied a vast field as it embraced two hundred miles square. There was no Presbyterian minister in the east nearer than Lexington, Virginia, none on the west this side of the Ohio River, and none north and south for at least one hundred miles. He had no assistance except an

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-5-

occasional visit from distant brethren or those visiting White Sulphur Springs or other resorts. Dr. McElhenny came to the old Stone Church in Lewisburg in 1808. He preached alternately at Lewisburg and Union giving one Sabbath to the Little Levels. When the Oak Grove Church was vacant, Dr. McElhenny would come up to preach and hold communion. One of his texts remembered by some of the old people was Jeremiah 22:29, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord"! He exerted a great influence for good over the Oak Grove Church which has always been served by great and noble men. There are Elders and Deacons in the church today, who are direct descendants of William Poage, the founder of the Oak Grove Church.

On December 1, 1844, the Rev. Mitchell D. Dunlap commenced his ministerial duties for one year. He supplied this church and Huntersville until 1868 and was also Principal of the Little Levels Academy. The name of the town and post office was changed from the name of Hillsboro to that of Academy in deference to the school which extended its beneficent influence far and wide through this and surrounding counties. But since change and time have obliterated all traces of the old brick academy, the name of the town was reverted to the old original name of Hillsboro. Mr. Dunlap was a devoted pastor and teacher and he laid the foundation for the development of many fine characters of both men and women in this county. After his retirement from the ministry, he and his wife lived on their farm situated on the road leading west from Hillsboro.

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-6-

There they died and their remains were taken to Monroe County for burial. Mrs. Dunlap loved and studied the Bible diligently, and it was owing to her influence and efforts that Mrs. Carrie Stulting Sydenstricker was led to go as a missionary to China where she labored for forty years, giving her life to the cause and her body was laid beneath Chinese soil. Mrs. Dunlap was a relative of Rev. James Haines whose memory is still green among some of the older residents of the Little Levels. There was a lapse in the worship of the church from 1868 to 1871, when through the efforts of Rev. James H. Leps, Rev. George L. Brown agreed to give one-fourth of his time until September 1, 1872.

On June 1, 1872 the Session employed the Rev. David Spotts Sydenstricker to preach for them one-half of his time for one year. At the end of the year they accepted a call to two churches in Arkansas. A correspondence was then opened with Rev. Henry Gilmore of Lexington, Virginia, to come and preach for us, which he promised to do, but when Shermeriah heard of it they implored him to remain with them. He would not agree to do it unless satisfactory with the Oak Grove Church. They sent delegates to confer with us to whom we relinquished our claim, relieving Mr. Gilmore of all embarrassment. An urgent call was then sent to Mr. Sydenstricker to return to us. He came back, took up our work and performed it faithfully and efficiently for thirty years. The old brick church was considered unsafe from a crack in the wall. In the emergency

school, and Rev.

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-7-

of having no place in which to worship, the Methodist people very kindly offered us the basement of their church that stood on the hill near the parsonage. The question of the erection of a new church soon sprang into being. It was decided to tear down the old church and use the good material in a new one. The present church lot was purchased and a very comfortable, pleasant, frame structure was erected thereon with a fine large basement beneath and the walls and flues built of brick from the old church. The new church was baptised with the old name of Oak Grove because of the "God's Acre" we had left on the old site. On motion of Col. R. G. Miller the lot on which the old church stood was to be held forever as a burying ground under the control of "The Oak Grove" church wherever its buildings might be erected.

Dr. Sydenstricker resigned June 18, 1905 and retired to a home he built in Hillsboro where he and his noble wife lived until his death in 1913. He was much beloved and deeply mourned. Mrs. Carrie Sydenstricker, the missionary, already referred to, was a product of his church in 1880. Rev. Jacob Summers Kennison went from this church into the gospel ministry. Dr. Sydenstricker was well educated, being able to read the Bible in Hebrew. Noted evangelists conducted revival services during his ministry, such as Rev. Wm. J. Wilhelm, C. M. Howard, M. L. Lacy, James H. Leps and others.

The Rev. J. L. Massey was an assistant to Dr. Sydenstricker in the vacation of 1902. He was very popular

for his early
work in Sunday School, and Rev.

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-8-

among all classes. He helped form what was then called "The Women's Foreign Missionary Society" which gradually led up to the "Circle" and Auxiliary plan of worship.

Taken from the Oak Grove Session
Books

by Miss Minnie Wallace
Miss Maggie Ruckman
Mr. M. J. McNeel

at Mrs. Warwick's cotton part of his James